

Castlemaine

naturalist

22

March '78

President: Mrs R. Mills

Minute Secretary: Mrs B. Singleton

Treasurer: Mr L. Bransgrove.

Visitors and prospective members are invited to attend the Club's sessions. The program of meetings and excursions is shown on the back page.

BASKET FUNGUS

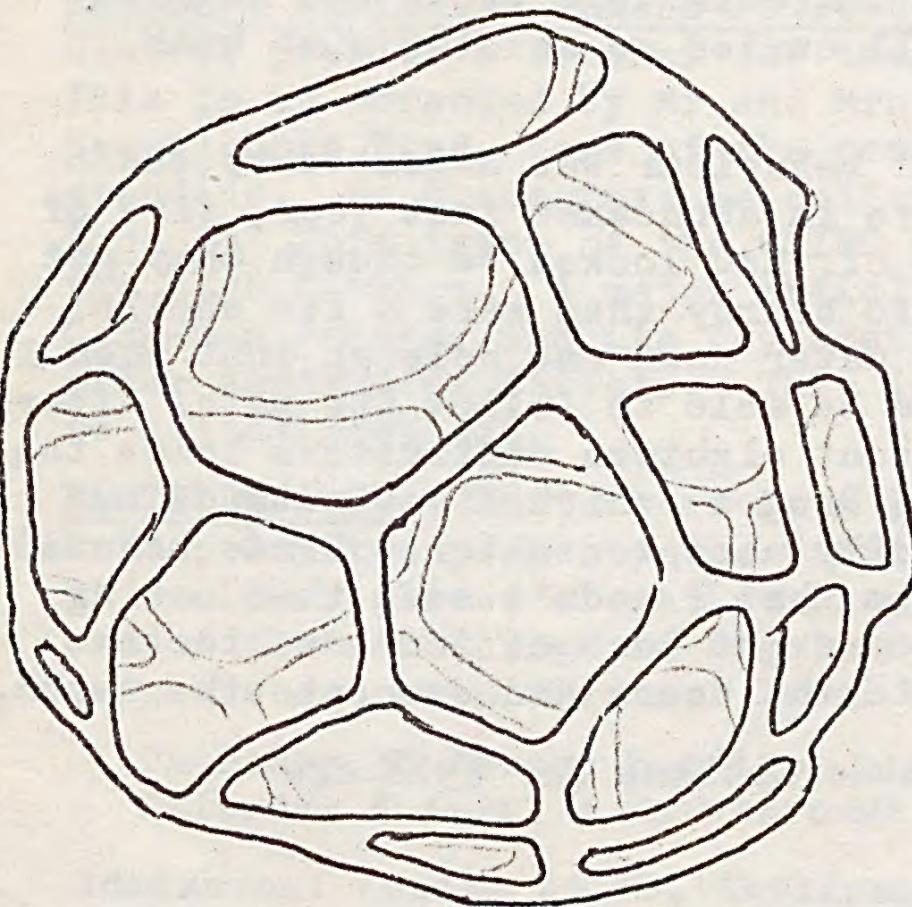
A specimen found in a Halford Street garden has been forwarded by Mrs McMeiken.

Perhaps other readers would know how common these are in Castlemaine.

The basket fungus (*Clathrus*) is related to the puff balls and has at first a similar appearance. If disturbed the stone-like "puff ball" will burst and blossom out into an open spherical basket about twice the size of a tennis ball.

When it first emerges the basket is covered with a brownish slime in which the spores are embedded.

My attempts to preserve the specimen were not very successful. I tried to dry it in the sun, but it shrank and broke up. (Diagram- after "Wildlife" Oct 1950)



EFFECTS OF A DRY SUMMER

by C. Singleton

Upon walking in the bush one instantly notices that all is not well. This has been one of the most dehydrating summers that this area has seen for a long time, and even some of the more hardy plants such as the Hardenbergia have curled up and died.

When I compared a watered sanctuary, namely Kaweka, with the normal bush I found quite a difference. Starting with the undergrowth the first thing that I noticed was the moss. It was green and spongy whereas elsewhere not much had survived at all. Hardenbergia was alive and well, the grass tussocks were partly green and some of the smaller plants that make up the undergrowth weren't dead. Some of the plants were flowering; a correa (reflexa?), a crowea, a few paper daisies, a grevillea and a purple flowering daisy bush.

Some of the plants have adapted to not losing so much water through transpiration, such as the Prickly Moses and a few other of the "thin leaved" plants. Not so much of the surface area of the leaf is exposed to the sun and so they retain a bit more water.

A few of the larger bushes were just dried up brown bunches in the normal bush and the grass tussocks were brown and nearly dead, chocolate lilies were all curled up and the mint bush looked very dead.

Some of the birds and animals' behaviour was affected by the heat too. Scorpions which were in abundance last year, five of which I knew the whereabouts of, had looked as though they got up and left. The only things to betray them were a few shells of beetle and such. I poured water down one hole so that when I started digging for it I would be able to follow its path. After a bit of digging I found it about eighteen centimeters below the surface ! An Eastern Bearded Dragon which lives outside our door became very tame and readily accepted water. Birds behaved in a similar way and ate things that I hadn't seen them eating before. This was probably because of lack of food due to the heat. Rabbits even came up to the doors and even ate the herbs.

SUBSCRIPTION ARE NOW DUE

Subscriptions for 1978 are

Single membership \$3

Family membership \$5

Student/Junior membership \$1

A REPORT OF THE POND LIFE EXCURSION Feb 11th, 1978

Some of the species found on the excursion were :-

Fresh Water Shrimp (Amphipoda)	Redfin
Seed shrimps (Cyprids)	Fry-minnows (?)
" " (Cyclops)	Diatoms
Clam shrimps (Conchostracha)	Pondsnail (Bulinus sp)
Damsel fly nymphs (Odonata)	Daphnia
Dragon fly nymphs (Odonata)	Rotifers
Caddis fly larvae (Trichoptera)	Hydra
Chironomus larvae (Gnat or Midge)	
Dytiscus beetle larvae	
Pond snail (Lymnae)	List supplied by
Backswimmers (Notonectidae)	G. Broadway.

NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

Supper As a trial, supper of tea and biscuits will follow meetings. Finance is to be by 10 ¢ donation in the plate. Mrs Winterbottom will organise the first supper.

Specimens and Exhibits The wide variety of exhibits at past meetings has been much appreciated by members. All members are invited to bring along items of interest.

Harcourt Christian Women's Fellowship This group has asked the Club to provide a speaker for their meeting on May 2nd. This to be arranged by Mr and Mrs Winterbottom.

Beaaglehole Fund Some of the promised money is still outstanding. Mr Bransgrove is collecting this.

Ecos 15 This issue of the CSIRO magazine has been added to the club library. A major article in this issue is the Cinnamon Fungus, and its devastating effect on Victorian and other Australian forests. This is of interest and concern to all naturalists.

PHOTOFLORA 78 Photoflora is a photographic competition held every two years by the Native Plants Preservation Society. It includes slides of native plants and birds. Attendance at one of the screenings is highly recommended to both photographers and naturalists. Local screenings are

Thursday 30 March: Bendigo Institute of Technology, McRae St.
Saturday 1 April : Maryborough. Anglican Hall, Clarendon St

Admission: Adults \$1.30, Children & Pensioners 50c, Family \$3.

CONSERVATION MEANS EXPLOITATION SAYS PROFESSOR

At our February meeting, the question of Conservation vs. Preservation arose, and has also been featured in the press.

The question is likely to become even more prominent in the months to come. The two articles reprinted here are both from "The Age"

By PROFESSOR KENNETH MELLANBY, who was director of the Monks Wood Experimental Station, Britain's main centre of practical ecological studies, from 1961 to 1974

FOR the past seven weeks I have been visiting Australia as the guest of the Association of Regional Parks and Countryside Commissions, a body which challenges many current beliefs regarding national parks as areas of wilderness from which all human exploitation, be it farming, timber production or mining, must be completely excluded.

The association suggests that at least some parts of national parks, and many areas of proposed parks, would be better run as are the national parks in many European countries, where farming and other rural activities are encouraged, and where the local population and their elected representatives play the major part in management.

I have come as an independent observer, with experience of conservation in Britain, Africa, Asia and America, to view the Australian situation, and to compare it with that in other countries.

I have travelled extensively in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the capital territories, inspecting farms and grazing areas, national parks, nature reserves and forests.

Though the tour was arranged by ARPCCA, I have met people of all shades of opinion, farmers and graziers and park administrators, scientists and members of voluntary conservation bodies. I have read innumerable reports on land management and conservation. I cannot claim to be an authority on Australia, but I believe that my reactions may be of some interest.

This is my fifth visit to Australia and five years ago I lectured on environmental topics in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra as the guest of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

On this visit I have been disturbed to find how divided Australia has become on the subject of conservation.

On one side there are those usually identified as "conservationists". Though this term includes people of many shades of opinion, they are generally thought to hold radical views, to oppose most forms of industrial development, particularly mining and woodchipping, and to wish to turn as much of Australia as possible into protected areas freed from grazing, farming and any type of economic exploitation.

They believe that large tracts of wilderness should be preserved or created, partly for the spiritual refreshment of city dwellers and as a refuge from the pressures of urban life.

Though comparatively few in number, these extreme conservationists appear to have considerable political power, and the ability to influence both Federal and State governments.

On the other hand, I find that most farmers, particularly those who work near to national parks, or in areas where new parks may possibly be created, hate this whole philosophy of conservation.

With some cause they fear that their freehold land may be taken over, and their leases of Crown land may be terminated, if new areas of national park are created. Many shire councillors share these views.

Members of the mining industry, even those in companies with an excellent record for restoring their workings, and who employ staff with real conservation expertise to carry out such work, find themselves under constant attack.

So also do foresters and members of the timber industries, even when they try to manage their forests with the least possible ecological damage and with an emphasis on the regeneration of native species of trees.

Miners and foresters are concerned lest many more areas in which they might work may be declared national parks, when they will be permanently excluded. They believe that this could be economically disastrous, not only to their own enterprises but also to Australia.

This has given rise to a challenge to the whole idea of the Australian national park, and this is one subject on which I have been asked my opinion.

My views are based partly on what I have seen, but mainly on my assessment of the very different views expressed to me by a great number of experienced Australians concerned with all aspects of the problem.

Australia differs greatly from Europe, where almost every hectare has been modified by man.

In Australia, much of the country is still comparatively unaffected, is covered with the continent's unique vegetation, and is inhabited by the fascinating native fauna.

Where such natural areas occur, I believe that it is essential that substantial samples must be rigorously preserved by such means as those employed in national parks.

However, much of Australia has been substantially modified by the white man during the past 200 years, and also by Aborigines over many thousands of years.

I view with alarm proposals to extend the boundaries of national parks to include land that has been farmed or systematically grazed, sometimes for well over a hundred years.

Where this has been done, as with land on the New South Wales side of the Tom Groggin station, instead of producing a native wilderness we find an impenetrable thicket of exotic blackberries overrun with non-indigenous rabbits.

Such areas, already inhabited by farmers, could form the nucleus for parks of the European type, where food production would continue and amenities would be available for visitors who might even learn something about the agricultural industry which has contributed so much to Australia's development.

As already indicated, I strongly support the policy of safeguarding unique and ecologically precious areas of unspoiled native vegetation, and hope that such areas will be large enough to be permanently viable.

But there are so many introduced animals and plants that in all but the driest areas considerable management may be needed not to "tame" the area but to encourage the native species.

I am not sure that funds and manpower for this are always available, and I would therefore think it wise to concentrate efforts on the most valuable areas rather than try to increase the expanse of protected park as far as some people would like.

I question the desire of some (mainly urban) Australians for vast tracts of "wilderness" which may have little scientific justification.

I am sure that there are sites of scientific importance from which any type of exploitation, be it farming, logging or mining, must be excluded; but I do not think it is necessarily right to apply these rules to all the land that some conservationists would wish to preserve.

I think that in exchange for safeguarding key areas, it should be possible to allow well-regulated development of a kind which can later be restored to something

approaching its original state in many interesting, but not unique, parts of Australia.

This may be illustrated by the case of Fraser Island. It would be a tragedy if the rain forest and some other sections were to be destroyed, but I personally would have agreed to have had about 1 per cent of the dunes mined and restored provided that 99 per cent of the island had been guaranteed protection.

As a conservationist, I would have had to be very sure of my case before causing the distress and unemployment to quite a large mining community and to those dependent upon it.

My visit to Australia has been a fascinating and rewarding experience. I am glad to discover that so much is being conserved, and that so many people in all professions care so much for their environment.

I think that the future will be ensured if only the different factions can establish better means of co-operation rather than waste their efforts in the sort of sterile confrontation which is at present so common.

I should warn the extreme conservationists who oppose all development as a matter of principle that they are already encouraging a "backlash" and a disgust with the philosophy of conservation which could undo the excellent work done in the past.

Scientist angers ecology groups

Victorian conservation groups have reacted with rage to the controversial views of British environmental scientist Professor Kenneth Mellanby.

Professor Mellanby is in Australia to represent the newly-formed Association for Regional Parks and Countryside Commissions, which was described yesterday as "an anti-conservation lobby spreading distortions and untruths."

The Native Forests Action Council said acceptance of the association's "coarse and primeval proposals" would set Australia's national parks scheme back 100 years.

It said the worst exploiters of the environment were supporting the group, specifying the woodchip, mining and grazing lobbies.

"This front can aptly be described as a conspiracy to defraud the Australian public of their national parks and recreation areas," the council said.

Professor Mellanby, British editor of an international journal on environmental pollution and executive on the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, this week endorsed the aims of the association.

He said environmental extremists were a public menace whose greedy ideas would cost the government a fortune. He said conservation meant careful and sympathetic exploitation.

The president of the Victorian National Parks Association, Mr. H. G. Bleakley, described Professor Mellanby's claims as nonsense which highlighted the absurdity of the association's approach.

BHL



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REMINISCENCE by F. Taylor

(This article, supplied by Mr Taylor, was first printed in the Bendigo Naturalist, in 1969.)

The convoy arrived at Harcourt and proceeded south to Mr C. Rice's paddock, where the last of the Blunt Greenhoods (*Pterostylis curta*) were in flower. Not far from these was a group of a dozen plants of Bitter Cryptandra (*Cryptandra amara*). The next stop was at another of Mr Rice's paddocks. Here the track led across the dam on which a large (6.4 m X 3.7 m) plant of Sarsaparilla (*Hardenbergia violacea*) grows-unfortunately flowering was almost finished. In the paddock the party dispersed and strolled through Wax-lip Orchids (*Glossodia major*), Pink Fingers (*Caladenia carneae*), Leopard Orchids (*Diuris maculata*), the last two flowers of the Gnat Orchid (*Acianthus reniformis*), thousands of which were in flower two weeks earlier. Other plants in flower were *Eriostemon verrucosus*, *Tetratheca ciliata*, *Indigofera australis*, *Caladenia dilatata* (in hundreds), *Marianthus procumbens*, and *Grevillea alpina*. Then across a gully crowded with Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) to the Red Spider Orchids (*Caladenia patersonii* var *concolor*). A few of these were left though a number had been enclosed in wire netting. Then on a short distance to the Bearded Greenhoods (*Pterostylis barbata*), one of which was in flower.

After lunch the convoy travelled to a side road near Taradale where a large colony of Nodding Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans*) was still flowering. Shrubs noted were Star-hair (*Astrotricha ledifolia*) in bud, the dainty Thin-leaf Acacia (*Acacia aculeatissima*), very large plants of *Tetratheca ciliata*, and a good show of Fairy Wax-flower. Here a nest containing two small young birds and an unhatched egg was found on the ground at the side of the road. It had evidently fallen or been knocked out of a tussock of grass. After replacing the nest, and a short wait, we saw both parent birds come in and feed the young in the nest. The birds were identified as the Buff-tailed Thornbill (*Acanthiz. reguloides*)

Returning towards Elphinstone, a left turn to a side road brought us to the forest where the Fairy Waxflower grows in scattered groups over a large area. Some of the groups of plants had well above the average sized flowers. Here also were the flowers of the Handsome Flat-pea (*Platylobium formosum*), *Tetratheca ciliata* Sarsaparilla, Green Correa and the Common Beard-heath (*Leucopogon vigatus*)

We followed the track to a pleasant glade of Black Wattle,

interspersed with Manna Gums, where a quantity of Ivy-leaf Violets (*Viola hederacea*) grow, and some were in flower. Bird life seen included the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, the Grey Shrike-thrush, a pair of Scissors Grinders, a pair of White-throated Tree-creepers, the Mistletoe Bird, Yellow Robin, White-winged Chough, Yellow-faced and White-plumed Honeyeaters and the Spotted and Eastern Striated Pardalotes.

The Drooping Mistletoe (*Amyema pendulus*) growing on an acacia was of interest, but the Sweet Hounds Tongue (*Cynoglossum suaveolens*), *Veronica gracilis* and other plants were not in flower. Travelling back towards the Highway, tall growing Buttercups, purple Violets (*Viola bentonicifolia*) and the Hoary Sunray (*Helipterum albicans*) were noted.

The final area, on the side of the Kalimna Park road, Castlemaine had growing on the hillsides a profusion of Waxflower, Pinkbell, *Daviesia ulicifolia*, *Grevillea alpina*, Sarsaparilla and Purple Mintbush (*Prostanthera denticulata*)

ORCHIDS OF THE CASTLEMAINE AREA No 14 of a series

THE DWARF GREENHOOD *Pterostylis nana*

by Mrs R. Mills.

Pterostylis nana
Dwarf Green Hood.



This small greenhood is fairly widespread in the Castlemaine area, and is usually found under or near low shrubs. It grows to about 15 cm, and usually has only one flower on a stem which rises from a rosette of basal leaves. It is fairly easily identified by its small (barely 1 cm long) flowers, which have long filamentous sepals which rise above the 'hood'. It is usually a green flower with a little white striping, but one colony near Maldon has a number of almost white plants.

It flowers in spring.

CASTLEMAINE FNC COMMITTEE (Cont from p 8)

I/P Pres: Mr R. Bradfield.

Committee: Mrs A. Joyce, Miss F. McIvor, Mr F. Meyer, Miss K. Singleton, Miss J. Chapman.

The committee meeting is on the fourth Thursday at 8.00 p.m.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March Program - Club

Friday March 10th The Summer Bush Provided by a panel of club members. Education Centre at 8 p.m.

Saturday March 11th The Summer Bush An excursion led by G Sitch. Meet at the Education Centre at 1.30 p.m.

VICTORIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUBS ASSOCIATION CAMPOUT - CRESWICK

All meetings, excursions from St Johns Hall, Napier St, Creswick

Sat March 11 Visit Mr Allan Sonsee's property at Springmount, followed by a tour of the Creswick mine sites. 1.30p.m.

Sat March 11 Annual meeting of VFNCA, followed by a talk by Mr Perry. Subject: Deep Lead Mines. Meeting starts at 7.30 p.m.

Sunday March 12 Visit to Quartz crushing battery, then to Slatey Creek. Leaves St Johns Hall at 9.00 a.m.

Monday March 13 Inspection of Forest Commission Nursery, Creswick followed by a visit to the School of Forestry. Leaves hall 9.00 am.

APRIL PROGRAM WVFNCA Campout at Vaughan/Fryerstown We are the host club and this will take the place of the April meeting.

Sat April 22 1.30 pm. Walk in the Vaughan District. A repeat of last year's excursion. Leader is Mr Bradfield. Leave the Mineral Springs reserve. Distance is about 8 km.

Sat April 22 1.30 pm. Some Geological Features of the Castlemaine District. Meet at the Mineral Springs Reserve.

Sat April 22 6.15 pm. WVFNCA meeting, at Fryerstown Hall

Sat April 22 8.00 pm The Castlemaine District. Talk/slides by a panel from the Castlemaine F.N.C. Fryerstown Hall.

Sun April 22 9.30 am. Mineral Springs Tour. Leave Vaughan Springs reserve. Leader is Mr Broadway.

MAY PROGRAM and JUNE PROGRAM

Friday May 12 The Himalayas Speaker is Mr R.D. Watkins.

Meeting time is 8.00 p.m. in the Education Centre, Mostyn St.

Saturday May 13 Muckleford Gorge Excursion. Leave the Education Centre at 1.30 p.m. Leader is Mr Bransgrove.

Friday June 9th Eucalypts Meeting at 8 pm in the Education C.

Sunday June 11th Eucalypt excursion. Leave Ed. Centre at 1.00 pm.

THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Pres: Mrs R. Mills V. Pres Mr G. Sitch, Mr M Winterbottom

Minute Sec Mrs B. Singleton Treas Mr L. Bransgrove

Librarian Mr F. Blake Publicity(Press) Mrs R. Mills

Publicity(Meeting notices) Mr C. Singleton Newsletter Mr E. Perkins. Records Mr M. Winterbottom Supper Mrs R. Winterbottom